

23. (Once amended) A process according to claim 17, wherein the fibres are randomly oriented in said porous substrate.

Please add the following new claims 24-34:

1 24. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 13,  
2 wherein the silica comprises a colloidal aqueous solution, or a silica powder dispersed in  
3 water.

1 25. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 13,  
2 wherein the fluorinated hydrocarbon polymer comprises one or more non-ion-conducting  
3 polymer(s).

1 26. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 25,  
2 wherein the non-ion-conducting polymer is selected from the group consisting of  
3 polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), fluorinated ethylene-propylene (FEP), tetrafluoroethylene-  
4 ethylene (ETFE) copolymers, poly(vinylfluoride) (PVF) and poly(vinylidene fluoride)  
5 (PVDF).

1 27. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 13,  
2 wherein the silica comprises a colloidal silica and the polymer comprises PTFE.

1 28. Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 13,  
2 wherein the ratio of silica to polymer is in the range of from 95:5% to 5:95% based on  
3 weight/weight solid materials in the binder mixture.

1 29. Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 28,  
2 wherein the ratio of silica to polymer is in the range of from 70:30% to 30:70% based  
3 on weight/weight solid materials in the binder mixture.

1                   30. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 29,  
2 wherein the ratio of silica to polymer is about 50:50% based on weight/weight solid  
3 materials in the binder mixture.

1                   31. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 13,  
2 wherein the mixed binder is in the form of a dilute aqueous dispersion.

1                   32. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 31,  
2 wherein the dilute aqueous dispersion has about 10% weight solids in the aqueous  
3 solution.

1                   33. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 13,  
2 wherein the fibres comprise at least one glass or silica.

1                   34. (Newly Added) A composite membrane according to claim 13,  
2 wherein the fibres have a diameter in the range of from 0.1 $\mu$ m to 50 $\mu$ m.

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